DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 442 160 CS 510 349

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TITLE "Angels Voices": Libretto by Gary Race. Cue Sheet for Students.
INSTITUTION John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 1996-00-00
NOTE 10p.; Additional funding provided by The Kennedy Center Corporate Fund and The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation.
AVAILABLE FROM http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/cuesheet/theater.html.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Learner (051)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Audiences; Cultural Activities; Death; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Multicultural Education; Opera; *Production Techniques
IDENTIFIERS *Drama in Educa ion

ABSTRACT

This performance guide is designed for teachers to use with students before and after a performance of "Angels Voices," with libretto by Gary Race and music by Noa Ain. The guide, called a "Cuesheet," is in the form of a Director's Notebook (a scrapbook/journal of clippings, quotations, illustrations, notes, and other items) to show how a director finds and develops ideas that come alive on stage. The opera seeks to lead audience members on a journey from the noisy modern world to a quiet place, showing the audience that the voices of people who have gone before them and the legends of long ago are always with them, but they must make time to listen. The Cuesheet contains seven activity sheets for use in class, addressing: (1) Developing the Story (describing the collaborative art form of opera, what a libretto is, outlining the opera's story and characters, outlining death myths from South America, Africa, Asia, and Native North America, and listing resources (both books and recordings) for further exploration); (2) Design Problems To Solve (outlining design problems in costume, set, and music design that needed solving); (3) Costume Sketches (looking at solving costume design problems and how costumes reflect season, social status, time in history, and country of origin); (4) Working with the Cast (offering notes on choosing a cast, and rehearsal notes on working with these singers/actors); and (5) Audience Notes (the audience's role and the art form of opera). (SR)

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"Angels Voices": Libretto by Gary Race. Cue Sheet for Students.

by Dawn Eddy Molloy

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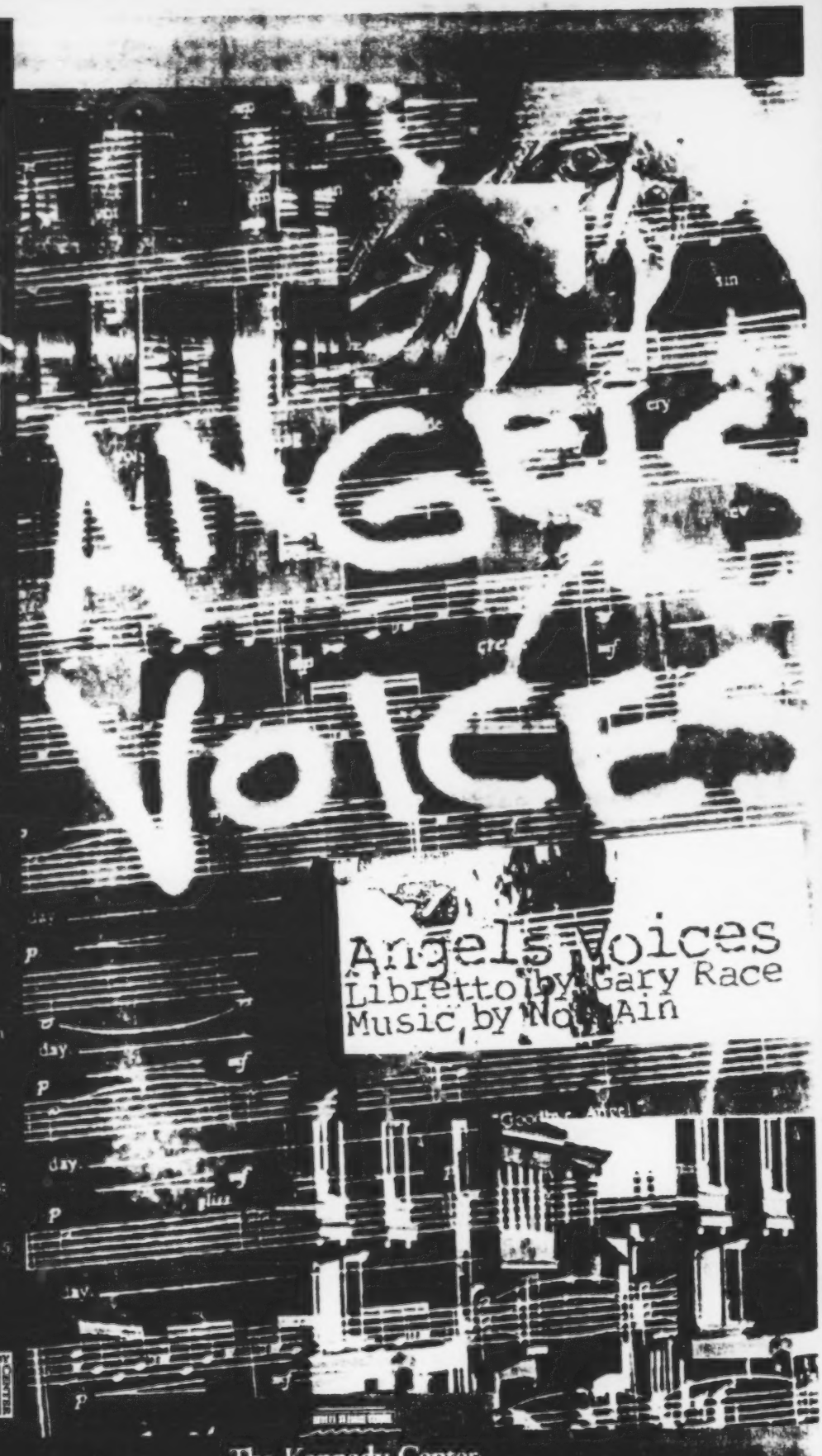
CUE SHEET
for Students

I am sharing my Director's Notebook — a scrapbook journal of clippings, quotations, illustrations, notes, and other items — so you may see how a director finds and develops ideas that come alive on stage.

A director is like other leaders: a sports coach, a musical conductor, a teacher. Like other leaders, directors guide people as they work to achieve goals. My goal for the opera *Angels Voices* is to lead audience members on a journey from the noisy modern world to a quiet place. The voices of people who have gone before us and the legends of long ago are always with us, but we must make time to listen.

I've placed a sun near some items you may want to discuss with friends, classmates, or family.



This Director's Notebook includes:

Developing the Story, *pages 2–3*
Design Problems to Solve, *pages 4–5*
Costume Sketches, *page 6*
Working with the Cast, *page 7*
Audience Notes, *page 8*

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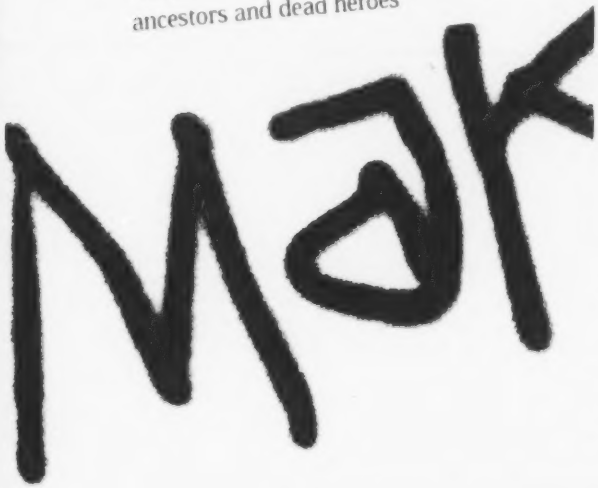
TO DO:
- ✓ research death myths: Africa; Asia; North and South America
- ✓ write libretto
- ✓ meet with composer to set libretto to music
- ✓ meet with design team to collaborate on set, sound, costumes, and lighting
- ✓ rehearse cast

Opera is a collaborative art form. It requires the combined efforts of many people in many kinds of work to create the performance.

The libretto is an opera's text; it tells the story through the singers' words. In this production, the director is also the librettist.

dissolve: one scene fades into the next without breaking the action

Shinto (SHIN-toe): native Japanese religion emphasizing worship of ancestors and dead heroes



The Opera's Story

Teenagers **Angel, Mani** (MAH-nee), and **Aisha** (Ah-EE-shuh) form the world's smallest gang. They call themselves "Mak." No reason; just a cool sound. The sound of two hands smacking. Mak. It's most of the word "max," which is most of the word "maximum." It means anybody, like, "Hey, Mac!" It's also **M**ani, **A**ngel, and (Aisha) **K**epler. They hang out together because they found each other. They use each other to deal with the world. One night, as the friends leave a bad part of town, a faceless car screeches to a halt and a gun is fired. Angel is shot.

Mani and Aisha rush Angel to the hospital, where **Dr. Emma Kurokumo** (Koo-roe-KOO-moe) tries unsuccessfully to save his life. In a nearby hospital bed, the wife of **Mr. Wonomi** (Woe-NO-mee), an old Native American farmer, has also just died.

As the doctor searches for words to comfort Mani and Aisha, Mr. Wonomi's tribal death chant grows louder. The hospital scene dissolves, and the four characters find themselves in a canoe on a gently flowing river. Mr. Wonomi knows, from his tribe's stories, that this river leads to the land of the dead.

Before they reach the land of the dead, a great black wave crashes over the canoe. The four find themselves in Tokoyonokuni (toe-ko-yo-no-KOO-nee), the Land of Bliss. Dr. Kurokumo recognizes the place from Japanese Shinto tales her father told her. She leads them up a mountain to seek a woman in a long white kimono who will lead them to Angel.

On the other side of the mountain, the scene turns into a jungle. Aisha knows this place from her grandmother's African death tales: Death is a giant who lives in the jungle. The characters chase away the Death Giant and find themselves in the warm, bright quiet of Mani's South American heritage.

Here, in the silence, the characters find the voices of people they thought were lost to them.

Voices that were with them all along.

Voices that remind them who they are.

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AUDITIONS

Multicultural cast needed for original opera. Roles available: Mani, teenage Hispanic male; Aisha, teenage African-American female; Dr. Emma Kurokumo, early 30s Asian female; Mr. Cliff Wonomi, 60+ Native American male. Classically trained singers and musical-theater performers who read music. Bring

Death Myths

Native North America

- cross river to enter land of dead
- when person dies, soul leaves body; takes long journey, crosses river, and enters pleasure-filled spirit world
- unearthly beings row souls across river separating living from dead
- in life, much to do and learn; in death, peace and stillness allow soul to find answers to greater questions

Asia

- Shinto: no death; person simply withdraws from this world
- Tokoyonokuni: dwelling-place of purified soul of the dead; land blessed with wealth, pleasure, and peace
- "Land of Bliss": in the clouds above the mountains—reached by climbing

Africa

- death unnatural; did not exist among earliest people
- death came because of a person's mistake
- death is a big old man; a giant
- death used to live deep in forest, trapping animals; now comes to village where many creatures live

South America

- everything must turn in its cycle, reach completion, and find its quiet place
- quiet=power and fulfillment

TO DO: LIBRARY RESEARCH

Cowles, R.B. *Sounds of a South African Homestead*. New York: Folkways Records and Service, 1988.

Heth, C. *Songs and Dances of the Eastern Indians from Medicine Spring and Allegany*. New York: New World Records, 1985.

Kishibe, S. *The Traditional Music of Japan*. Tokyo: The Japan Foundation, 1982.

Lewiston, D. *Kingdom of the Sun: Peru's Inca Heritage*. New York: Nonesuch Records, 1969.

Find these recordings to get a feel for sounds, rhythms, instruments, and melody lines unique to each part of the world.

Cotterell, A. *The Macmillan Illustrated Encyclopedia of Myths and Legends*. New York: Macmillan, 1989.

Courlander, H. *A Treasury of African Folklore*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1975.

Erdoes, R. (editor). *The Sound of Flutes and Other Indian Legends*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1976.

Nicholson, I. *Mexican and Central America Mythology*. New York: P. Bedrick, 1985.

Schultz, G. F. *Vietnamese Legends*. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1965.

Look for dominant themes and symbols in the death myths from each culture. What's unique to each culture? What recurs across cultures?

Gary Race

Where should the apostrophe go? If I say, "Angel's Voices," I'm limiting the "voices" to the character named Angel. If I say "Angels' Voices," I'm talking about the voices of a lot of angels. I think both answers are right. After watching Angels Voices, let me know what you think. Write to me:

Gary Race, Director and Librettist
"Angels Voices" Cuesheet
Education Department
Kennedy Center
Washington, DC 20566

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4 Design problems to solve

From The Director

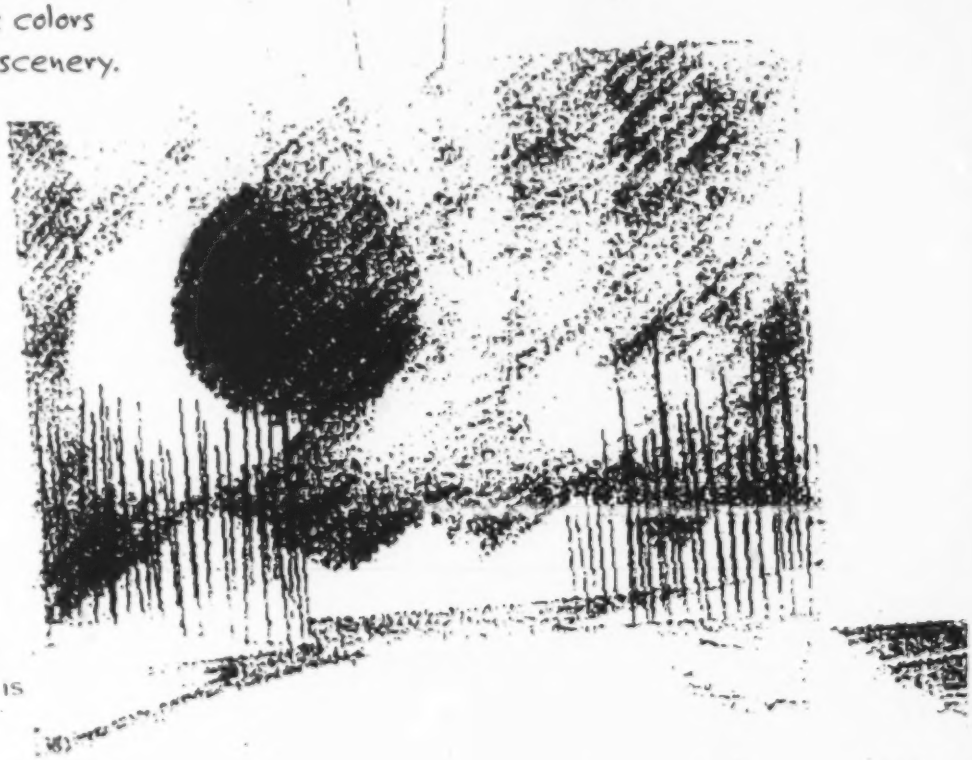
To: Costume and Set Designers
Colors are important in many cultures' death legends. Each primary color had specific meaning to the Mayans of Central America. Yellow = East, where light emerges. Red = South, where death comes. Blue = North, land of thorns. White = West, land of seed and flower. Let's work these colors into the costumes and scenery.

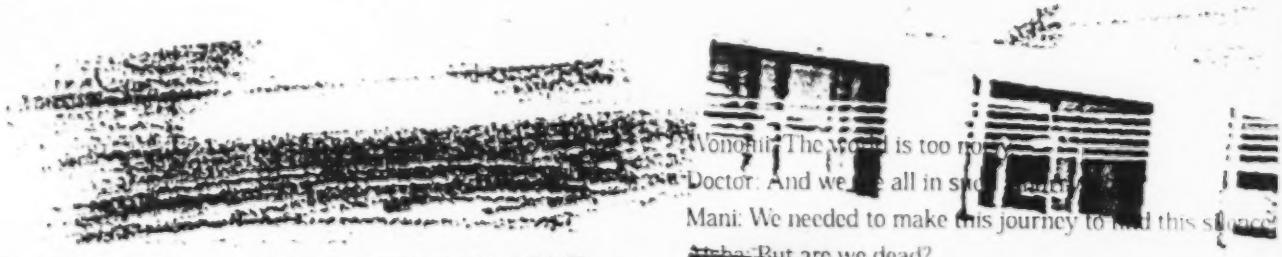
From The Director

REMIND Set Designer to keep it simple. Let the set support the story, not overwhelm it. The opera should speak directly to the audience. They can find its meaning; there are no "right" answers. Also, the entire set must fit in a small van for touring. Any ideas?

From the Set Designer:
How about four or five cubes that can be rearranged to form different scenes: a canoe, rocks, a mountain? Actors move the cubes as part of the storytelling. Scene changes become part of the play's journey.

A moon rises and sets throughout the journey, giving the sense that something mysterious or spiritual is present.





Mani: We needed to make this journey to find this silence?

Set design by James Kronzer

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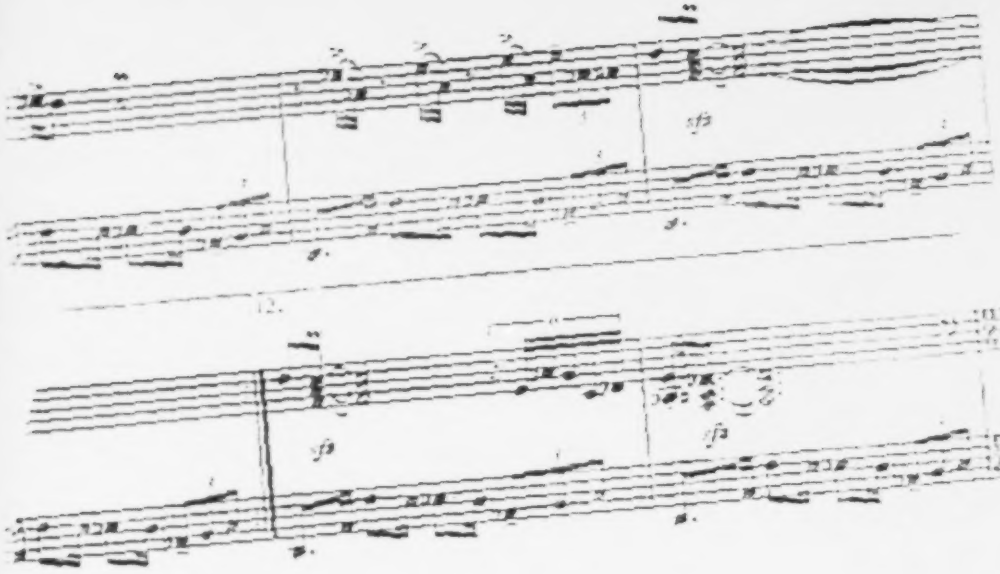
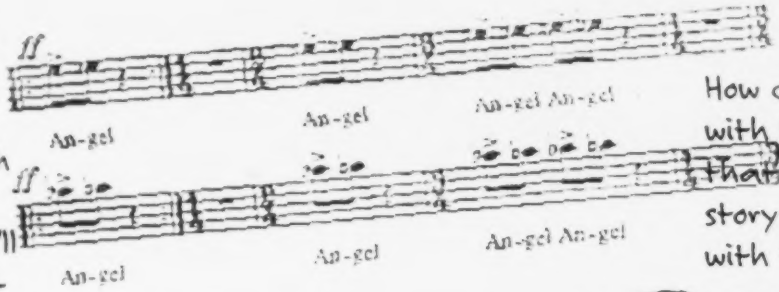
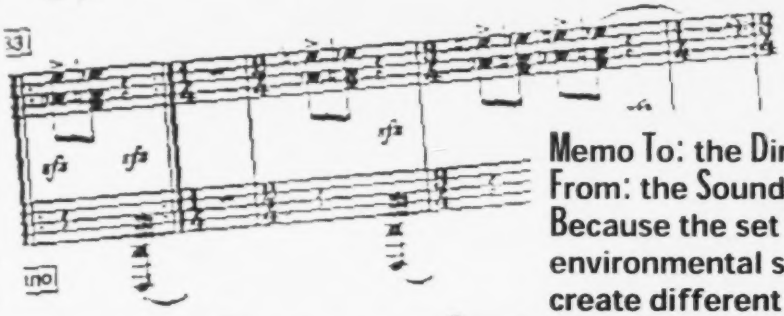
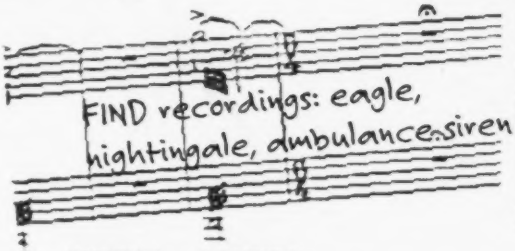
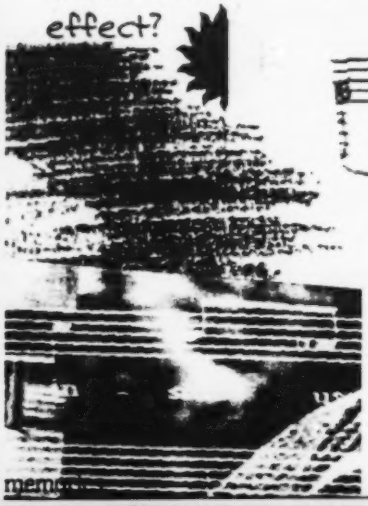
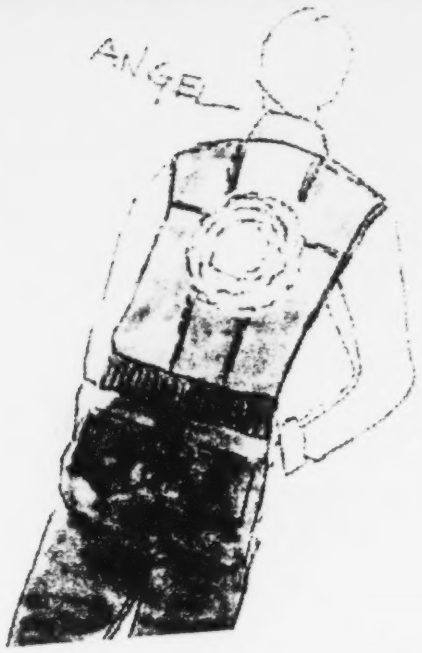

How can we use sound to support the JOURNEY the characters take?

Overall, Angels Voices should feel like a journey through time and civilization. We'll gradually shift from realistic/ urban to fantastic/ mythical. How can the elements of set, costume, sound, and light work together to create this effect?

How can we mesh sounds with the musical score so that they enhance the story and do not interfere with the opera's music?



Memo To: the Director
From: the Sound Designer
Because the set will be minimal, environmental sounds must help create different settings -- sounds change gradually from one environment to another. Below are some of the environmental sounds I'm considering using. For each setting, what other sounds would you add?

SETTING	SOUNDS	DESIRED EFFECT
City	automobiles, gun shot, ambulance siren	Realistic
Hospital	heart monitor, paging system, bell chime	Realistic
River	rippling water	Peaceful
Mountain	dripping water, gentle wind, nightingale, temple bells	Unearthly
Jungle	birds, monkeys, lion roar	Wild
City	city sounds replace jungle animals one by one	City is a jungle





[Memo]

To: the Director
From: the Costume Designer
Originally, Angels Voices was set in cool weather. We talked about characters shedding garments to reveal ancestral costumes underneath modern clothing. Because of the weight of many fabrics, it makes more sense to add costume pieces on top of summer-weight modern clothing. Maybe we could work costume changes into a kind of tribal ceremony as characters earn the symbols of their heritages. What do you think?

To consider: How does each character's costume reflect season, social status, time in history, and country of origin?

PLATE 1 (1/5)

Colors — begin with dull, muted colors of the city transform to bright, tribal colors of myths and legends Shift from realistic to fantastic

PLATE 2 (2/5)

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Casting Notes

I have cast four singers who act well and who can convincingly portray the four characters. Two of the singers look like teenagers, but are actually older because of the training it takes to be an opera singer. The voice is both the simplest and the most difficult musical instrument to play. We all have a voice, but it is subject to human frailty. Singers must remain healthy to ensure that their instruments will work. Singers "stay in shape" by exercising the muscles involved in singing - the diaphragm, which controls breathing, and muscles in the larynx around the vocal cords - every day.

Rehearsal Notes

Begin each rehearsal with a release and focus exercise. It will help us to work calmly and develop the sense of ensemble we need to perform this piece. Try this for the first rehearsal:

1. Lie on your back on the floor.
2. Imagine that your body is sinking just below the surface of the floor and being gently supported.
3. Inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth.
4. Imagine your breath to be flowing in a gentle cycle that comes in through your nose, travels through your entire body and exits out your mouth.
5. As you repeat the cycle of breath, allow your breathing pace to slow down.
6. After 3 or 4 complete cycles, gently sit up, and then stand and allow the cycle of breath to continue.

Notes for the second rehearsal:

Let's discuss these **character sketches.** How do the characters feel about themselves and about each other? What does each character want? How does each character reflect his or her cultural heritage?

Angel Hidalgo: never seen because he dies in the opening scene. Angel is the leader of Mak.

Mani Menendez: the "cover-the-rear" guy in Mak. Mani is tough, but always advises caution. The name Mani comes from Brazilian mythology. Mani was a hero who brought sustenance to his people.

Aisha Kepler: the only girl in a family of 12 kids. Aisha mothers the guys in Mak, but considers herself "one of the guys." The word Aisha comes from Africa and means "life."

Dr. Emma Kurokumo: the emergency room doctor when Angel dies, she is a serious scientist who rarely lets her emotions show. Secretly she writes lovely poetry. In Japanese Buddhism, Emma-O was the god of death and a merciless judge. Kurokumo means dark cloud.

Mr. Cliff Wonomi: a 60+-year-old Native American farmer who still practices his tribe's old customs. The name Wonomi comes from the North American Maidu tribe and means "no death." Wonomi was a sky god and supreme father who ruled over all things until he was overthrown by Coyote.

Costume designs by Howard Kurtz

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Include in the program

THE AUDIENCE: The Final Collaborators

Opera may seem like a strange art form to many Americans. Unlike television or movies that aim for realism, operas take subjects from life and enlarge them, aiming for heightened reality. In *Angels Voices*, complex music and fantastical scenes will take you beyond everyday reality.

Compared to television and rock concerts, operas ask for a different kind of audience response. Television almost begs us to talk back to it. Rock concerts invite us to join the musical celebration by singing, clapping, shouting, and sometimes dancing.

Operas ask for something different. They request emotional and intellectual commitment that comes only from close and quiet attention. While we may laugh and applaud at appropriate times, we watch and listen. There are good reasons why:

- **Operas take longer to unfold than 30-minute television programs; to appreciate them fully, you must pay close attention to what the singers say and do.**
- **Other audience members who are listening and watching closely can be easily distracted.**
- **Performers are in the same room as the audience and are affected by audience behavior. Opera singers must move precisely, must listen carefully to time their lines and tune their notes, must react to other singers on stage, and must make subtle adjustments based on the moment. Unexpected activity can destroy that concentration.**

Before attending an opera, audience members often familiarize themselves with the characters and story. Opera dictionaries, available at most bookstores, provide most operas' stories. With foreign-language operas (and even with operas in English), knowing the story ahead of time helps audience members understand and enjoy the action. Freed from the worry of comprehending every word, audiences can listen to the music, take in the visual effects, and enter the opera's world.

When the composer, director, designers, performers, and audience collaborate, they create an opera to which each has contributed.

MANI:

Every day, we must make a quiet time, away
from all of the regular noise, and listen to another kind of sound.
Inside that quiet place inside, inside.
And in this way, we can all of us hear angels voices
sing inside us every single day.

Gary Race, librettist/director, is a professional stage director and award-winning arts educator, and a writer of works for theater. He has written five English translations of operas and two music-theater works for performance by children.

Noa Ain, composer, was educated in France, and in America at the Juilliard School of Music. Her film, theater, and dance music has won many awards. Highly regarded for her opera compositions, she was commissioned by the Kennedy Center to collaborate with Gary Race on *Angels Voices*.

The Kennedy Center
Lawrence J. Wilker, President
Derek E. Gordon, Associate Managing Director, Education

Angels Voices

Writer: Dawn Eddy Molloy
Editor: Rosalind Flynn
Design: Paul Dupree Communications

Cuesheet is funded in part through the support of the U.S. Department of Education, The Kennedy Center Corporate Fund, and The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation.

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